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10-69 EDITIONS (20-51)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

MFG. 11-70

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FILE RF DCI, DDCI, EX/DIR, NIPE, DDP, ADDP, CSRF, D/PLC, SDO, D/OC46,
CABLE SEC. LIMDIS - BACKGROUND USE ONLY
D/NIC, D/CRS, [redacted]

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ACTION EA-18
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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. FOLLOWING IS MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION LOWENSTEIN AND MOOSE DICTATED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THEIR CONVERSATION THIS MORNING WITH SOTH PETHRASY:

2. WE ARRIVED AT 10 A.M., PRESENTED CALLING CARDS AND EXPLAINED WE WERE MEMBERS OF STAFF SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, HEADED BY SENATOR FULBRIGHT, AND WERE IN VIENTIANE FOR PURPOSE OF SUBMITTING A REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL SITUATION IN LAOS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS. SOTH SAID HE HAD, OF COURSE, HEARD OF CHAIRMAN FULBRIGHT.

3. HE THEN BEGAN LONG DISCOURSE ON HISTORY OF "STRUGGLE LAO PEOPLE FOR INDEPENDENCE" BEGINNING IN 1945 WITH EMPHASIS ON INTERFERING ROLE PLAYED BY U.S. POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY. AFTER TWENTY MINUTES WE BROKE IN TO SAY THAT WE ACQUAINTED WITH PAST HISTORY AND WERE CERTAIN THAT MISTAKES HAD BEEN MADE BY ALL PARTIES CONCERNED, INCLUDING U.S. AND NORTH VIET NAM, BUT WERE MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT COULD BE DONE REGARDING

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SITUATION AT PRESENT. SOTH REPLIED THAT U.S. COULD MAKE POSITIVE SIGN OF SUPPORT FOR ATTEMPTS REPRESENTATIVES VARIOUS LAO FACTIONS RESOLVE PROBLEM OF LAOS AMONG THEMSELVES. WE ASKED WHAT SORT OF SIGN HE MEANT. HE RELIED BY GOING INTO LENGTHY CRITICISM OF AMERICAN BOMBING, SAYING IN COURSE OF DECLAMATION THAT U.S. BOMBING EQUALLED ATROCITIES PERPETRATED BY NAZIS DURING WAR AND THAT U.S. HAD DROPPED MORE BOMBS ON LAOS THAN EXPLOSIVE POWER OF ATOMIC WEAPONS DROPPED ON JAPAN. HE SAID U.S. WAS FLYING 150 SORTIES A DAY OVER NORTH LAOS, INCLUDING B-52, AND THREE, FIVE OR EVEN TEN TIMES AS MANY SORTIES OVER SOUTH LAOS. IN ADDITION, LAO AIR FORCE T-28S WERE BOMBING NOT ONLY FROM BASES ALL ALONG MEKONG IN LAOS, BUT FROM UDORN AND UBON AS WELL. HE SAID T-28S WITH LAO MARKINGS HAD BEEN SEEN ON THAI BASES.

4. FOLLOWING THIS EXPOSITION HE THEN NOTED THAT THE TWO PRINCES HAD N MED THEIR REPRESENTATIVES, THAT KHANG KHAI HAD BEEN PROPOSED BY SOUVANN AS THE SITE FOR TALKS BETWEEN THE LAOTIANS AND THAT THIS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY SOUPHANOUVONG. THERE REM IN OTHER MODALITIES, HE SAID, OBSERVING THAT THE SETTLEMENT OF THE LAOTIAN PROBLEM CONCERNED NOT ONLY LAOS BUT ALSO THE UNITED STATES. HE INDICATED THAT A GESTURE FROM THE U.S. WAS NEEDED AND REFERRED TO THE EARLIER REQUEST OF THE PATHET LAO FOR A PROVISIONL AND LIMITED BOMBING HALT.

5. ON SUBJECT PRISONERS, HE REFERRED TO RECENT INTERVIEW OF SOUPHANOUVONG WITH SWEDISH JOURNALIST IN WHICH STATEMENT HAD BEEN MADE THAT ALL PRISONERS WHO WISHED TO DO SO COULD BE SENT TO NEUTRAL COUNTRY. WE ASKED WHAT CONDITIONS PRECEDENT WERE INVOLVED. HESAID BOMBING WOULD HAVE TO STOP FIRST. WE THEN NOTED THAT NORTH VIET NAM H D RELEASED LIST OF PRISONERS (LOWENSTEIN NOTED HE HAD OBTAINED LIST PERSONALLY FROM MAI VAN BO IN PARIS DECEMBER 23 ON BEHALF SENATOR FULBRIGHT), AND WE ASKED WHY PATHET LAO COULD NOT DO SAME. SOTH PETHRASY SAID THAT SITUATION IN LAOS DIFFERENT FROM THAT IN NORTH VIET NAM BECAUSE BOMBING NORTH VIET NAM HAD CEASED.

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IN LAOS, THERE NO MEANS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN VILLAGES EVEN UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS. IT WAS OFTEN NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF U.S. AIR ACTIVITY EVEN REACH SITE OF DOWNED PLANE TO ASCERTAIN FATE OF PILOT. FOR THESE REASONS IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR PATHET LAO TO COMPILE A COMPLETE LIST. WE REFERRED TO ACKNOWLEDGMENT ON PART OF SOUPHANOUVONG THAT PRISONERS BEING HELD BY PATHET LAO, INCLUDING AMERICAN PILOTS, AND ASKED WHY PARTIAL LIST OF PILOTS BEING HELD COULD NOT BE RELEASED. SOTH PETHRASY SAID THAT BOMBING MUST FIRST CEASE.

6. SOTH PETHRASY SAID, IN COURSE OF FOREGOING REMARKS, THAT PRISONERS BEING HELD IN VARIOUS REGIONS OF LAOS AND WERE WELL TREATED. ALSO SAID PATHET LAO DID NOT CONSIDER THEMSELVES AT WAR WITH U.S. BUT AS VICTIMS ILLEGAL ATTACK AND THUS U.S. PILOTS NOT CONSIDERED PRISONERS OF WAR TECHNICALLY.

7. SOTH PETHRASY CONDUCTED INTERVIEW ALONE AND IN FRENCH. AS WE WERE LEAVING, HE GAVE US VARIOUS NEWS RELEASES FROM PATHET LAO OFFICE IN HANOI, PATHET LAO PUBLICATION "TWELVE YEARS OF INTERVENTION," AND FOLDER OF PICTURES. MEETING ENEDED AT 11:15.

8. OUR IMPRESSION WAS THAT SOTH PETHRASY EXTREMELY RIGID AND DOCTRINAIRE. WE SAW NO NUANCES IN CONVERSATION.

9. EMBASSY COMMENT ON SOTH'S REMRKS FOLLOWS SEPTEL.

GP-3

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